

9th Naval Construction Brigade

*Historical
Information*



“Construimus, Batuimus”
“We Build, We Fight”



ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFF.</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
1 Jun'45	4	12	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	4	12	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	7	12	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45	7	14	BNP625 & R
1 Oct'45	3		R
1 Nov'45	3		R

9th Const. Brigade (INACTIVATED)

Location - Iwo Jima

9th Brigade

10-28-44 - The 9th Brigade hereby established composed of the 8th and 41st Regiments. (CNO conf. disp 231903 NCR 1322 to Cincpoa dtd 24 Oct'44). Effective upon direction of Cincpoa.

11-3-44 -- 9th Brdg. established as follows when directed by Cincpoa -

8th Reg.

8th CB	106th 2nd Sec.
90th CB	35th CB (Sp)
95th CB	CBD 1042 (Sp)

41st Reg.

31st CB
62nd CB
133rd CB

(CNO conf.ltr OP30-2CK15-UOT over (SC)P16-5 over Ser. 01348230 to Bupers and Cincpoa dtd 27 Oct'44).

12-28-44 - 9th Brdg. established effective upon embarkation at mounting ports of units concern and will be constituted in accordance with CNO 01348230 of 27 Oct and modified by Comserpac 120135 Nov and CNO 021515. 9th Brdg. is to report to prospective IsCom for duty. 41st Reg. comprised of batts assigned to MarCorps temp duty(31st, 62nd & 133rd CB's). 41st & 8th Reg. to report to the 9th Brdg. for duty. OinC Spare Pa Sub Depot(P13) to report to OinC 9th Brdg. (Cincpoa Sec. disp to Comserpac 172204 dtd 18 Dec'44).

12-28-44 - Co. A & B of the 23rd (Sp) assigned temp add. duty with 5th Phib Corps. Upon completion will report to IsCom and for further assignment to the 9th Brdg. and the 8th Reg. (Cincpoa Sec. disp to ComGenFMFPac 190205 dtd 19 Dec'44).

1-12-45 - The 9th Brigade activated as of this date - 5 Jan'45. (Comservpac Sec. disp to 9th Brigade 050227 dtd 5 Jan'45).

5- 7-45 - The 9th Brdg. is located at Iwo Jima. (Dirpac docks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45)

6- 6-45 - The 9th Brdg is located at Iwo Jima. (IsCom Iwo Jima Sec disp 031027Z Jun'45 to CN

6-12-45 - The 9th Brdg available at Iwo Jima 15 Sep'45. (OinC 9th Brdg sec ltr 00137 dtd 28 May'45 to Comservpac)

Location - Iwo Jima

9th Brigade

- 6-25-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 9th Brg. - located at Iwo Jima.
- 7-10-45 - The 9th Brg is located at Iwo Jima. (IsCom Iwo Jima sec disp 030753 July to CNO)
- 7-20-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 9th Brg. - located at Iwo Jima. Comments re 23rd(Sp).
- 8-28-45 - Remove from alerted status my 091943 July of higher classification NOBrigs staffs of 6 & 9. (Comservpac Sec disp 243213 to Commarianas).
- 9-18-45 - Propose to inactivate 9th Brig & assign OinC to 41st Reg. (Comservpac sec disp 120307 Sept'45 to Jancommcen, Iwo Jima).
- 9-18-45 - Comservpac directed OinC, 9th Brig to inactivate 9th Brig. (Comservpac conf disp 132303 Sept'45 to 9th Brig).
- 10-2-45 - 1 Sept'45 report of 9th Brig. Located at Iwo Jima.
- 11-19-45 - 9th Brig. was inactivated on 5 Nov'45. (9th Brig. restr. ltr ser 2253 dtd 5 Nov'45 to Comservpac).

' INACTIVATED

NINTH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BRIGADE

FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

HISTORY OF THE NINTH U. S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BRIGADE

PREPARED BY

CORPORAL WILLIAM J. THOMPSON, CEC, USN

AND

LIEUTENANT (jg) D. O. CONN, CEC, USNR

PREFACE

The Ninth U. S. Naval Construction Brigade was organized for the purpose of heading an organization of construction battalion units for the development of the island of Iwo Jima into an advance base. The operation was known under the name of WOKIDOMA. The assault phase was under the Fifth Amphibious Corps with the 3rd, 4th and 5th Marine Divisions participating in the operation. Upon completion of the assault phase of the operation, plans called for the island to be turned over to an Army garrison force and the Brigade units to perform all necessary construction to establish an advance base.

ORGANIZATION

On January 5, 1945, the 9th Naval Construction Brigade was activated as a unit by CinCPac Secret Dispatch 050227. Captain Robert C. Johnson, 78094, CEC, USNR, was assigned duty as Officer in Charge of the Brigade. At the time of the activation of the Brigade, the following officers reported for duty: Commander Charles M. Herd, 87610, CEC, USNR, assigned duty as Operations Officer; Lieutenant Commander William J. Thompson, 87375, CEC, USN, assigned duty as Executive Officer; Lieutenant Donald O. McKay, 253034, CEC, USNR, assigned duty as Assistant Operations Officer.

Prior to assuming charge of the Brigade, Captain Johnson had been on temporary duty in the Advance Base Section of the staff of CinCPac at Pearl Harbor, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. The duty was for the purpose of planning, organizing and echeloning the supplies, material and equipment for the operation. He began duty in CinCPac on 27 October 1944. The duty was terminated on January 5, 1945. The brigade was to consist of two construction regiments, seven and one-half construction battalions and one construction battalion detachment. The 8th Naval Construction Regiment under the command of Commander Rudolph I. Taggart, 238391, CRC USNR, was composed of the 8th, 90th, /^{95th}
106th (Section 2) Construction Battalions and the 23rd Naval Construction Battalion (Special). (The 23rd Naval Construction Battalion (Special) was assigned to the Brigade and Regiment for administration only, as it was to be under the Army Port Group Commander for operations.)

The 41st Naval Construction Regiment under the command of Commander Paul F. Henderson, 210577, QMC USNR, was composed of the 31st, 62nd and 133rd Naval Construction Battalions. The three battalions of the 41st Regiment were assigned to the Marines during the assault phase of the operation. Upon completion of this phase they were to be released to the 41st Regiment and the regiment was to begin functioning as a unit.

The Officer in Charge of the Brigade believed that a small staff would be more efficient than a large one. That this opinion was adhered to is illustrated by the fact that only four officers and five enlisted men were used during the period from January 5, 1945 until March 7, 1945. Later the Staff was increased, and during the planning for the Olympic operation, on August 1, 1945 it was composed of six officers and twelve enlisted men, with plans for further

expansion to eleven or twelve officers and approximately forty-two enlisted men.

The overall garrison force organization and the work to be performed permitted the use of a small brigade staff. According to the base development plan, the Island Engineer and his staff were responsible for the preparation of plans, the establishment of priorities for construction and to assist in liaison between the brigade and the using units for whom the work was being performed. Fundamentally the Officer in Charge believed that the construction battalion was the basic Seabee unit and should be charged with the responsibility of accomplishing the project including the preparation of plans after the necessary details and preliminary sketches had been prepared by higher echelons. The organization at Iwo was analogous to an owner building a structure in which the owner had a representative or consulting engineer, and work was being performed by contract. In this case, the Army Garrison Force was the owner and under the command of Major General J. E. Chaney, USA. The Island Engineer, Colonel David A. Morris, CE, USA, was the owner's representative, and the brigade was the contractor, with the brigade staff acting in an administrative capacity and the battalions being sub-contractors on the various projects. This scheme, while criticized at numerous times, chiefly because the brigade did not work out the minute details and pass them down to the lower echelons, was highly successful. It permitted the battalion commanders and regimental officers greater latitude in the execution of the assigned work. It was the opinion of the Brigade staff that such latitude provided greater initiative, gave a greater sense of responsibility, and was a successful agent in producing and maintaining a high standard of construction progress and morale.

The first meeting of the Officer in Charge of the brigade, his staff and the various battalion representatives was held at the Hawaiian Area Brigades administration building on January 11, 1945. Present were:

9th Naval Construction Brigade:

Captain Robert C. Johnson, 78094, CEC USNR
Commander Charles M. Herd, 87610, CEC USNR
Lieut. Commander William J. Thompson, 87375, CEC USN
Lieutenant Donald O. McKay, 253034, CEC USNR

8th Naval Construction Regiment:

Commander Rudolph I. Taggart, CEC USNR
Commander C. J. Scheve, CEC USN
Lieutenant A. H. Lange, CEC USNR

41st Naval Construction Regiment:

Commander Paul F. Henderson, CEC USNR

8th Naval Construction Battalion:

Commander W. T. Powers, CEC USNR
Lt. Comdr. W. W. Aultman, CEC USNR

31st Naval Construction Battalion:

Lt. Comdr. D. J. Ernilio, CEC USNR, Officer in Charge.

62nd Naval Construction Battalion:

Lt. Comdr. F. B. Campbell, CEC USNR, Officer in Charge.

90th Naval Construction Battalion:

Commander George S. Brockway, CEC USNR, Officer in Charge.
Lt. Comdr. David W. Hesser, CEC USNR, Executive Officer
Lt. R. L. Ringo, CEC USNR, Operations Officer.

95th Naval Construction Battalion:

Commander W. L. Johnson, CEC USNR, Officer in Charge.
Lt. Comdr. A. T. Lewis, CEC USNR, Executive Officer.

106th Naval Construction Battalion (Section 2):

Lt. Comdr. B. Marcus, CEC USNR, Officer in Charge.
Lieut. Grant R. Smith, CEC USNR, Executive Officer.

133rd Naval Construction Battalion:

Lt. Comdr. R. P. Murphy, CEC USNR, Officer in Charge.

23rd Naval Construction Battalion (Special):

Lt. Comdr. H. W. Heuer, BM, USNR, Officer in Charge.

Colonel D. A. Morris, CE, USA, Island Engineer

Lt. Col. J. E. Diagnan, CE, USA, Assistant Island Engineer.

The meeting covered the various phases of construction, the proposed camp location of all Seabees, the planned establishment of the camps, the probable work assignments for each battalion. All of the planning was based on photographic interpretation of the island and various intelligence reports and operations reports compiled by the joint staffs in the Pacific Ocean Area.

The work assigned was broken down so that the 8th Regiment would perform all building construction, miscellaneous structures, tank farm, water distribution system, the harbor, air warning and defensive installations and related structures; and the 41st Regiment assume charge of all airport and road construction. In practice the plan worked fairly well, but did not obtain maximum efficiency as the operations were slightly out of balance because of the rating structure and skill of the personnel in the battalions. There was some shifting of personnel between battalions on a work project basis to eliminate some of the difficulties encountered. The work accomplished by the exchange of personnel was rather minor, and except for the completion of the airdromes in which all battalions furnished some operators and equipment, had little bearing on the overall development of the base. The opinion just expressed is largely that of the writer and of the 8th Regiment staff, and is not fully concurred in by the Officer in Charge or the Officer in Charge of the 41st Regiment.

The 8th Regiment was an organization of long standing and was equipped and staffed to handle a variety of projects. The 41st Regiment staff was exceedingly small and consisted in the early stages of three officers and four or five enlisted men. Later the 41st Regiment was to be expanded both in officers and enlisted men.

Construction Battalion Detachment 1078 was in Charge of Lt. D. W. Smith, CGC USNR. The detachment consisted of eight officers and 185 enlisted men and was

assigned the job of supplying brigade units with automotive and construction equipment spare parts. The unit was formed in the United States and joined the Brigade at Iwo Jima in March and April, 1945.

SCOPE OF WORK PLANNED:

The Base Development Plan (Iwo Jima) called for the development of the island as an air base. The principal projects were south, central and north airdromes, listed during the planning stage as Fields #1, #2 and #3; tank farm for aviation and motor gas and diesel fuel; approximately twenty miles of primary roads and forty miles of secondary roads; a general hospital, field hospital and station hospital; air warning services, fighter control and director stations; bomb and ammunition storage; water supply system; a small naval base; and a harbor project including the placing of block ships, building a breakwater and necessary piers and quay walls. In addition there would be storage areas developed, warehouses erected and housing and messing facilities built for approximately 37,000 officers and men. The south field called for a field 200' x 5000' as a fighter field, together with necessary taxiways, plane parking areas, hard stands and operational buildings and facilities. Airfield #2 (Central Airdrome) was to consist of two Northeast-Southwest runways 200' x 8500' and one East-West runway 200' x 6000' with 100' shoulders. Airfield #3 (North Airdrome) was to be 200' x 5000' with 50' shoulders, and necessary operational facilities. Parking area was to be provided for 129 fighter planes. On the Central Airdrome, hard stands were to be provided for 60 VIP planes and 111 fighters. On Field #1 (South Airdrome), taxiways and parking area for 147 fighter planes.

As the base developed, the length of the fields were extended, additional

taxiways and parking areas were provided and another fueling strip was planned. The expansion of the airdromes added to the operational buildings and facilities when Change #7 to the Base Development Plan was issued. It approved changes for the South Airdrome for the parking of 258 planes. The paved runway was 200' x 6000', and a large portion of the area was to be surfaced for taxiways and parking areas. As it developed, the expansion was approximately 100% above that which was originally planned. On the Central Airdrome, the East-West runway became the fueling strip, was widened from 200' to 570' graded section, fueling outlets increased from 30 to 60 and the two parallel strips were extended from 8500' to 9800'. Included in the development were taxiways, hardstands, parking areas, service aprons, warm up aprons, etc. When the Japanese nation surrendered, one of the VLR strips had been paved with hot mix asphalt. A taxiway from the south end of the VLR strips to the south end of the North Airdrome had been completed. The North Airdrome was being extended from 5000' to 5800'. The expansion of each of these fields and use of additional fighter groups, establishment of a bomber command, increased the facilities at the Central and North Airdromes about 90%.

CHRONOLOGY OF OPERATIONS:

The following events in chronological order summarizes the activity of the brigade and its units.

As previously mentioned the brigade was formed on January 5, 1945. The first meeting of all organizations in the brigade except Construction Battalion Detachment 1078 was held on January 11, 1945. On January 18, 1945 the 8th Regiment and 8th Battalion held a conference with the brigade to discuss the materials and equipment required for the construction of the Harbor. On January 23, 1945, an LST moving part of the 62nd Naval Construction Battalion

went aground near Maui, T.H. All personnel were removed safely, but it was necessary to obtain supplies and equipment from Advance Base Construction Depot, Pearl Harbor, to replace the cargo that was on the ship. This was done most expeditiously and was handled without difficulty by the units concerned and by the Advance Base Construction Depot.

Captain Johnson and Commander Herd left Pearl Harbor on 31 January and 1 February, respectively, for an inspection of advance bases and airfield construction on the islands in the Central Pacific and Marianas group. They were chiefly interested in inspection of the VIR fields at Guam, Tinian, and Saipan. These two officers rejoined the assault forces at Saipan. Commander Herd was assigned temporary additional duty as Assistant Engineer on the Engineer Staff of the 5th Amphibious Corps. The balance of the Brigade staff was embarked on February 5, 1945, on the S. S. Dashing Wave. The ship sailed from Pearl Harbor on February 6, 1945, and arrived at Iwo Jima on March 2, 1945 (D plus 11).

"D" Day for the assault of Iwo Jima was February 19, 1945. The 31st Naval Construction Battalion was assigned to the 5th Marine Division. The 62nd Naval Construction Battalion was assigned to the 5th Amphibious Corps, and the 133rd Naval Construction Battalion was assigned to the 4th Marine Division.

The entire complement of the 133rd Naval Construction Battalion landed between the hours of 0930 and 1620 on "D" Day. The 31st Battalion sent in 64 men and one officer on "D" Day. The first man ashore from the 62nd Battalion was on D plus 5. This group included five officers and 197 men. Commander Herd arrived on shore on D plus 2, and Captain Johnson came ashore on D plus 3. All of the battalions with the assault forces were to become part of the 41st Regiment when released by the Marines. Responsibility of the battalions and work done was as follows: 133rd Battalion operated the beaches and acted as shore party for the

Marines. Only minor construction work was accomplished by the battalion during the first ten days of the operation. The 31st Battalion began work on the South Airfield, then known as Motoyama Field #1, on February 24 (D plus 5). Later the work on the field was taken over by the 62nd Battalion and the 31st Battalion began construction of facilities on the southern part of the island and the survey for a road up Mt. Suribachi. The Brigade staff which was aboard the S. S. Dashing Wave came ashore on March 3 (D plus 12). Temporary headquarters were established in Target Area 181-0. With the brigade came part of the staff for the 8th Regiment and all of the officers attached to the 41st Regiment. The 8th Naval Construction Battalion was also embarked on the S. S. Dashing Wave and other ships in the convoy which accompanied it. Hard fighting was still in progress on that date. Occasional shell fire would land on Airfield #1, and Airfield #2 had not been secured beyond the limits of Motoyama village.

The first B-29 landed on Airfield #1 on March 4, 1945. The landing was without incident. One of the crew members poked his head and shoulders out of the side of the B-29. Someone informed him that the field was occasionally under fire to which he replied, "I don't care if we are being shot at; this is a pretty nice island."

The brigade had no official status at this time, but on March 5, 1945 Captain Johnson reported to Major General Schmidt, USMC, to confer with Admiral Spruance on the development of the harbor. Work was started on the Mt. Suribachi road by the 31st Battalion. A message was received by Vice Admiral Turner, Commander Task Group 56.1, from Major General LeMay, 21st Bomber Command, which read as follows: "Emergency landing is subject. Appreciation is expressed for the prompt and effective assistance given the B-29 of this command which was forced

to make an emergency landing at Iwo Jima on return from a mission flown 4 March. The fact that the landing strip and your facilities (were ready) unquestionably saved this aircraft from a forced ditching at sea."

Further conferences were held March 6, 1945 (D plus 15) with Admiral Hoover and Rear Admiral Hill regarding the harbor development. Unofficially, the opinion was expressed that the harbor was needed, but the volume of shipping would probably not justify its construction. On this date, the first fighter groups of P-51s and P-61s arrived. The 8th Battalion had several projects under way.

On March 7, 1945, the brigade began functioning as a unit with the 8th and 41st Regiments. On this date, the 8th Regiment had the 8th Battalion and the 23rd Battalion (Special); and the 41st Regiment had the 62nd Battalion under their control. Work was started on Airfield #2, and an effort was being made to prepare the Northeast-Southwest runway for operation. The project was assigned to the 62nd Battalion, but equipment operators were drawn from all battalions. First mail for the outfits arrived on March 7 (D plus 16).

During this particular period, the greatest difficulty was the operation of the beaches. Work was highly inefficient. Unloading of ships was extremely slow. Weather conditions were not favorable, and the planned unloading of 6600 measured tons per day as listed in Base Development Plan was not reached. Construction battalions furnished work details and equipment operators. The loose sand and bad beach conditions added to the difficulty of handling cargo. The dumps for receiving the cargo were not too well known to drivers and the delivery of supplies and materials was frequently delayed. The situation gradually cleared through experience, better weather conditions and familiarity with road system, and the posting of markers to direct traffic to the various areas, organizations and dumps.

On March 9, 1945, the 31st and 133rd Battalions were released to the Brigade and 41st Regiment. At the time the battalions had been received into the brigade the 31st Battalion had 27 officers and 1013 enlisted men on board, six enlisted men had been wounded and one was listed as missing. The 62nd Battalion had 26 officers, 1018 enlisted men, two enlisted men had been killed and four wounded. The 133rd Battalion had on board 24 officers, 858 enlisted men, two officers and 32 enlisted men had been killed, six officers and 122 enlisted men had been wounded, and five enlisted men were listed as missing. On the same date, the 8th Battalion had 27 officers and 974 enlisted men on board. One officer was killed by a plane while making a survey on the South Field. One enlisted man was injured. Four enlisted men had been wounded by a land mine.

At 1430 on March 11 (D plus 20) work order was received to stop work on the East-West strip of Airfield #2 and complete and place in service 5000' of the Northeast-Southwest runway by 1800, March 14. (This was the existing Jap strip.) Work projects were under way by all four battalions, but the manpower of the battalions was not fully utilized due to (1) lack of working area (2) enemy action restricted operation (3) materials and equipment were not yet ashore.

Dr. Swenson of the U. S. Geological Survey assisted the Island Engineer and brigade with preliminary exploration for development of the ground water supply.

On March 14 (D plus 23) the 90th and 95th Battalions and the balance of the 8th Regiment staff came ashore. They were bivouaced in Target Areas 181 and 198. Rear Admiral C. H. Gotter, CGC USN, Director Pacific Division Bureau of Yards and Docks, Rear Admiral L. B. Coombs, CGC USN, Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks; Captain C. T. Bikeman CGC USN, and Lt. Comdr. Hobert, CGC USNR arrived to make an inspection of the island which at that time was secure enough to inspect.

On March 15 the officers made a trip to the top of Mt. Suribachi on a bulldozer of the 31st Battalion. The road had not been entirely completed and it was not possible to use automotive vehicles for the trip to the top of the volcano. On March 15 Airfield #2 was placed in use.

On March 16, it was discovered that the 90th and 95th Battalions were camped largely on top of the ground. They were instructed to dig in and to prepare foxholes for all personnel. Later this instruction was unnecessary because a banzai attack in the vicinity of where these battalions were bivouaced gave the men sufficient incentive and initiative to dig in without instructions from the brigade. On this same date, the Commanding General Expeditionary Troops, Pacific, sent a mailgram which is quoted in part: "Let us remember the skillful work of the Seabees who, laboring under fire, immediately began to transform this barren wasteland into a powerful advance base." This statement was issued in connection with the completion of the assault and conquest of the island. On March 16, a 4000 barrel tank farm was completed and ready for use.

First radar equipment was moved over the Mt. Suribachi road on March 20, (D plus 29). This was the first movement of automotive vehicles over the famous road. Lt. Comdr. Abe Zimmerman, CEC USNR, Staff of ComForArea, came to Iwo to discuss estimated completion dates and other matters pertaining to construction of various projects and in the development of the base as outlined in the Base Development Plan.

Fleet Admiral C. W. Nimitz, USN, paid a visit to the island March 24, 1945, and made a complete tour of the island, including the proposed and partially constructed breakwater for small boat basin, trip to Mt. Suribachi, both Central and South airfields and other projects. He stated that up to that date, our efforts in constructing airfields had saved approximately 65 B-29 bombers.

Lt. Comdr. F. W. Herring, CGC USNR, came aboard on March 25 to discuss the preparation of historical reports as required by the Bureau of Yards and Docks. On the morning of March 26, Lt. Comdr. Herring was given a bit of first-hand information in the form of a Jap banzai attack. The attack occurred in Target Areas 198, 199 and 215. Some of the enemy were killed in the storage compounds of the 90th and 95th Battalions. Two Seabees of the 90th Battalion lost their lives and one from the 95th was wounded. Intelligence reports later showed that approximately 250 of the enemy had been killed.

Major General J. B. Chaney, USA, assumed command of the island at 0800, 26 March 1945.

The first staff meeting of the brigade, regimental and battalion officers was held on March 29. On that date, D plus 38, first night work was ordered by the island command. The 3rd Marine Division and units of the 147th Infantry provided security in the form of a perimeter guard.

During the first 40 days of the operation, little work was accomplished toward the final completion of the base development project with the exception of the airfields. A large portion of the manpower was spent in preparing temporary bivouacs, handling of cargo, preparation of temporary dumps and the handling and rehandling of various materials, depending on the enemy situation and the availability of materials and equipment. During this period considerable protests were made by the regiments because it was necessary to use highly skilled and rated men for menial labor. There was a shortage of seamen in all the battalions and it was necessary for rated men to perform all types of labor. This, however, was not serious and later the men became reconciled to the fact that it was necessary to be done.

The 106th Naval Construction Battalion (Section 2) arrived in the harbor

on March 25 and debarked on March 26. About this time work was being started on the permanent Seabee camp areas. Previously there had been little rain, and on April 3, heavy rains made the roads practically impassable. Sand when wet provided better traction than when dry. Airfields were not seriously effected. On April 3, the 8th Battalion brought in 12 Jap prisoners that had been captured at their camp site. On April 3, work was started on the North Airfield by the 31st Battalion. On April 5 (D plus 45) GroPac was decommissioned and Naval Base, Navy 3150 (Iwo Jima) was formed. Construction Battalion Detachment 1078, consisting of 6 officers and 185 men arrived. (Two officers had reported previously.)

On April 7, Captain Johnson received a dispatch promoting him from Captain to the rank of Commodore, to rank from April 3, 1945. The promotion was to remain in effect while he was Officer in Charge of the 9th Naval Construction Brigade.

Land based fighter planes accompanied B-29s on a strike on the Jap homeland this date. This was the first time land based fighters had been over the Empire.

Work on the airfields was not keeping pace with the deadline established by the island command and higher echelons, and the Base Development Plan. To increase the output of work, the 8th Regiment was ordered to provide additional equipment and operators. The work was performed under the guidance of the 41st Regiment. Reasons for the delay were failure to start work as scheduled as the airdrome sites had not been secured from the enemy; the change in plans; and the effort spent in making existing fields operational which did not materially contribute to the final completion of the work.

On the afternoon of April 16, a dump truck with ten men from the 106th Battalion struck a land mine beside the road in Target Area 201-T. Truck was completely demolished and the chief petty officer in charge of the detail was blown

to bits. All ten of the men were either killed outright or later died of wounds. On this date the 31st Battalion moved to their permanent camp area.

Night operations on Tank Farm A was begun on April 20. The 147th Infantry provided a perimeter guard for the night operations. On this date the 95th Battalion moved to their permanent camp area. On April 22, the 90th Battalion moved to their permanent camp area.

On April 24, a B-29 crashed into a motor grader and a roller that were working on the South Airdrome. The Seabees operators escaped without injury. The bomber crashed and burned and also destroyed two P-51 fighters. On April 26, an ammunition dump located near Mt. Suribachi caught fire. The fire lasted for several hours. The fire spread and caused a heavy explosion and set fire to the 23rd Battalion (Special) supply dump. The battalion lost considerable camp and organizational equipment. Some damage was done to the Island Command headquarters camp, and shrapnel penetrated the Avgas tank, but the fuel was not ignited. Only a few casualties resulted from the explosion.

A meeting was held with the Island Engineer and brigade on April 27 to discuss the construction project which will be transferred from the 31st Battalion to the 811 Engineer Aviation Battalion. Those present were Commodore Johnson and Lt. Comdr. Thompson of the Brigade; Colonel Morris, Island Engineer; Lt. Col. Arnold, Commanding Officer of the 811th Engineer Aviation Battalion; Commander Henderson, Officer in Charge, 41st Regiment; and Lt. Comdr. Emilio, Officer in Charge, 31st Battalion. The 811th Engineer Aviation Battalion took over the work at the North Airdrome at 1800 this date. Assistance was given them for loading crushed stone and also for the loan of asphalt distributor and two stone spreaders.

The much-discussed harbor project was again given study by Commodore Fisk, USN, of ConSerOn 12 and Commodore MacGruder, USN, of ComForArea Staff. Plans were

prepared for the harbor by the 8th Battalion, and Lt. Newman of that battalion was placed on temporary duty to Guam, Tinian and Saipan to study harbor development in that area. Paving was started on the East-West runway (fueling strip on Central Airdrome) on April 29.

A heavy rain storm on May 3 did some damage to roads and made some sections practically impassable. The large graded area of the airdromes served as impervious surfaces to increase the run off of rainfall from the airfields. The heavy rain brought quick attention to studies and plans for airdrome drainage. During the storm a PB4Y2 made an emergency landing on the North Airdrome. It was the first landing on that field, and was without event.

The first fresh fruit and vegetables and fresh meat were received on May 5, (D plus 75). Change in diet provided a big boost to Seabee morale.

The first ordered landing of planes on the North Airdrome was on May 7. A group of TAG planes brought in a fighter air service group assigned to the North Airdrome.

Brigade headquarters moved from Target Area 181-0 to 185-0 on May 10. The headquarters building consisted of three Quonset huts, which served the 9th Brigade, and 8th and 41st Regiments. It was a considerable change from the unfloored tarpaulin-covered shed that had been in use since March 7.

On May 11, three 10,000 tanks in Tank Farm A were tested and were ready to receive gas. On May 13, Rear Admiral C. E. Cotter, CEC USN, DirFacDocks; and Rear Admiral W. H. Smith, CEC USN, of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, arrived. Inclement weather and low ceilings kept them at Iwo until May 17. During their visit, four B-29s crashed into the sea after crews had parachuted to safety. This was because of fog covering the island. On May 15, heavy rainfall and high wind

stopped all construction projects and caused high seas. The winds were estimated at 30 to 35 miles per hour steady, and up to 75 miles per hour in gusts. Some damage was done to block ships in the breakwater. Temporary camp of CHD 1078 was damaged and practically inundated by the heavy run-off from the Central Airdrome. Damage to the airfield was minor, but the continued rain made some sections of the island road system practically impassable.

Eight CRC Ensigns reported to the Brigade for duty on May 17. All were V-12 graduates with very little experience. All were assigned to various battalions for duty.

The hot mix asphalt plant was placed in operation on May 19. The plant was operated by the 133rd Battalion.

About the first of May, the Brigade had authorized the battalions to work 60 hours weekly. Later, on May 19, the Island Command stated that it was necessary to work seven 10-hour days per week per man. The officer in charge protested this directive and he used the following reasons: (a) decreased effectiveness of the men through operational fatigue, (b) increased operational accidents, (c) increased loss of time due to sickness, (d) increase in deadlined equipment. Receipt of letter of protest was acknowledged, and the Island Commander agreed to review the case in about forty days. (On July 1 the 70-hour week was rescinded.)

The first B-29 landed on the Northeast-Southwest VIR Strip on May 21. The landing was unintentional, but without incident. First air raid since the brigade was functioning on Iwo occurred at 2200 May 21. Two planes were shot down but no damage nor casualties caused to Seabee personnel or installations. On May 22, tentative approval of harbor plan was received from ComForArea. The driving of sheet piling for the bulkheads and quay walls were started by the 5th Battalion.

Paving of the Northeast-Southwest VLR strip with hot mix asphalt started on May 24. After placing some of the pavement, the officer in charge of the 41st Regiment recommended unofficially to the brigades that the 2nd VLR strip not be paved. Reason given was that paving seals off steam that is generated below the surface, and it in turn saturates the subgrade, causing soft spots and subsidence of subgrade. As a result of these soft spots, the pavement fails and breaks up.

During the period covered to date, rainfall has hampered the work only slightly, but fog from late April until late May has interfered with air operations.

The short feature, "To The Shores Of Iwo Jima" showing the assault operation was shown to an enthusiastic audience at the 95th Battalion theater 3 June 1945. On June 1, there was an air raid at 0300. One officer and four enlisted men were killed and eleven enlisted men were wounded in the 90th Battalion by a small fragmentation bomb. A small fire was started in the storage compound at the hot mix asphalt plant. A fighter strike was called this date and 148 planes were dispatched, 27 planes were lost due to the heavy weather encountered between Iwo and the Japanese Empire.

Commander A. W. Van Loer, CEC USNR, of the staff of ComServFac was aboard for temporary additional duty regarding the re-outfitting of construction battalions proposed to be moved on a future operation. On June 6, heavy seas during a prolonged squall swamped and overturned a small tanker that was filling the 4000 barrel tank farm. The storm also shifted some of the block ships being used for the harbor breakwater. Afterwards, the line of piling for the breakwater had to be shifted to clear the block ships after they had been moved into a new position.

On June 7 the first VLR strip was placed in operation using the asphaltic concrete surface. During the day 102 B-29s landed and made use of the facilities.

Poor subsoil under the first VLR paving made it necessary to remove approximately 1500 feet of crushed stone base and subgrade. A 12" deep backfill was made with crushed stone ranging from 4" down. This was crusher run from the primary unit of the crushing plant.

The Harbor project came in for more discussion on June 14, with Commander F. G. Elliot of the 301st Battalion and Commander Rabbage, USMR, ComServOn 12 representative. They expressed to the officer in charge the opinion that it would be extremely hazardous to use a dredge in the harbor prior to building of the breakwater. Reason was danger from storms. The officer in charge of the brigade did not believe that the breakwater should be built by using shore based equipment working from a fill placed between the two rows of sheet piling which was to form the bulkhead.

The proposed expansion of the South Airdrome to provide additional space for fighter squadrons was estimated to involve 500,000 cubic yards of excavation. Practically all of the work will have to be done by shovels and trucks, as the haul is too great for the economical use of carryalls and tractors.

The ground temperature in the vicinity of the fueling loop created excessive temperatures in the aviation gas. Lt. Comdr. G. L. Neely, USMR, of ComServPac came aboard on June 16 to study the condition. The temperatures in the loop were found to range from 90° Fahrenheit to 162° Fahrenheit. Through the circulation of the fuel from Tank Farm A to Tank Farm B, the average temperature was reduced to 110° Fahrenheit. It is believed that the temperature would be satisfactory for use for the refueling of planes and would not cause vapor locks in plane fueling systems. Commander Neely was aboard from June 16 to June 22. During that period high winds and intense rain squalls and resultant high seas occurred.

On June 23, Commodore Johnson and the Island Engineer and Captain F. W. Connor, USN, Commander of the Naval Base, Commander Rabbage, ComSerOn 12 representative, proceeded to Guam on temporary duty in connection with the harbor development project. They returned on June 26 and reported that the harbor development was being delayed pending action by CinCPac. On June 24, there was an air raid alert at 0104. Two planes reached the island and one bomb was dropped with no damage to Seabee projects. June 27, arrangements were made for the return to the States of the first group of 42 year old men eligible for discharge on an age basis.

July 1, the six-day work week went into effect. Equipment was to be worked seven days and all projects using equipment two shifts per day. On July 2 the landing strip of the south airdrome was completed. Also 8500 feet of asphalt pavement had been completed on the #1 VLR strip, Central Airdrome. This was the length originally called for in the Base Development Plan, and completion date was established as D plus 110. Several subgrade failures occurred in the VLR strip and in some cases it was caused by ground water, other cases caused by soft spots in the subgrade, and thirdly, the hot mix asphalt pavement sealed off the steam and caused it to condense and saturated the subgrade with consequent subgrade and pavement failure. On July 12 the first VLR strip was completed and paved for a length of 9800 feet. Daily yardage being moved by the Seabees during this period averages about 35,000 cubic yards. The first group of the 23rd Naval Construction Battalion (Special) went aboard LSTs today for moving to Okinawa. The embarkation was completed on July 14, and was made in five LSTs. Recoutfiting of the battalion was done by ABCD Guam.

On July 16, the Officer in Charge of the Brigade called a conference of all Seabee units and informed them of plans to inactivate the 8th Regiment, 62nd,

95th, 106th (Section 2) Battalions and NCSD 1078. The units remaining after the inactivation would be the 41st Regiment consisting of four battalions — 8th, 31st, 90th and 133rd. The inactivation and consolidation was made to provide for rotation of personnel overseas 21 months or longer, to provide four full strength battalions, and to decrease the supplies and equipment required for reoutfitting of the units before a move. The inactivation was scheduled to be effected on or about September 1, September 15, and October 1, with the 62nd and 106th (Section 2) Battalions being the first units scheduled. At 1930 this date, Commodore Johnson presented fifty-five Purple Heart Medals to officers and men of the 133rd Battalion.

July 19, Lt. D. O. McKay of the brigade staff departed for ComServPac at Pearl Harbor on temporary additional duty in connection with planning for forward movement of the brigade. July 20, a sub-committee of the Naval Affairs Committee visited Iwo. Commodore Johnson departed for ComServPac, Pearl Harbor, on temporary additional duty in connection with planning. Commander C. H. Herd was named as acting officer in charge of the Brigade.

Commander Marianas awarded Commodore Johnson the Legion of Merit. (Details of the award and citation covering it were not known.)

July 23, Lt. (jg) D. O. Conn, CGC USMR reported for duty with the brigade. He was received from the 106th Battalion (Section 2). Six Japs were captured in a cave near the 90th Battalion camp. (The date: D plus 154.) It is a long time to live underground with little food and water. July 24, the largest number of B-29s to be seen passed over the island. During the afternoon, 186 of these planes landed at Iwo. July 27, emphasis was placed on readiness of a special hard stand. It was tested on July 29 and found satisfactory. July 29 Lt. G. R. Smith, CGC USMR and Lt. (jg) Grad, CGC USMR, reported for duty. They were received from the 8th Regiment.

July 29 there was some delay in the refueling of planes at the fueling strip. The Island Command called for an explanation and report from the Island Engineer and 9th Brigade. Apparently the report was satisfactory as no further action was taken. July 31, Lt. Comdr. W. E. Guest, CEC USNR, departed after making an inspection tour of the AGESPD. He reported that the operation was excellent and the supplying of parts was as good as, or better, than any similar outfit in the Pacific.

August 1 there was a heavy rain and wind storm. The high seas endangered #2 Rock Crusher located near Mt. Suribachi. High seas seriously eroded the West Beach area.

At the request of the Island Command, a meeting was held on August 6 with all officers in charge and Security Officers of the battalions to discuss camp security and security of work projects against enemy airborne attacks. On August 10, Vice Admiral Ben Moreel, CEC USN, Chief of Bureau of Yards and Docks; Rear Admiral J. J. Manning, CEC USN, Director, Eastern Pacific Division, Bureau of Yards and Docks; Rear Admiral G. H. Cotter, CEC USN, Director, Western Pacific Division, Bureau of Yards and Docks; Captain H. P. Needham, CEC USN, Personnel Section, Bureau of Yards and Docks; and Lt. Comdr. Minor Hudson, CEC USNR, of the Bureau of Yards and Docks made an inspection and tour of the island. The Admirals were the guests of Major General Chaney, Island Commander. During their visit, announcement was received of Japanese offer for surrender. The group departed on a scheduled trip to Okinawa.

The announcement of probable surrender of Japan did not cause any demonstrations such as the false peace rumor with Germany. The news was received without any noticeable demonstrations or firing of weapons.

On August 13, Captain F. F. Henderson, 41st Regiment, was ordered to Pearl Harbor for temporary duty in connection with future planning. Considerable discussion for curtailment of construction was entered into at an Island Command Staff meeting on this date. The pulling of the submarine pipe line for Tank Farm B was under way, was done by a net tender from the Naval Base. August 15, the offer of surrender by the Japanese was announced at 0900, Iwo time. Except for a temporary stoppage of work projects, by the 8th Battalion and 90th Battalion, there were no demonstrations. The Island Command declared a holiday for August 16. This was the first holiday since arriving on the island.

August 18 the officers in charge of the battalions met with the Assistant Island Engineer and his operations officers, and discussed the curtailment of construction projects. The work remaining to be done was minor. Construction on the Central Airdrome was practically eliminated with the exception of two taxiways. The 2nd VLR strip was to be graded but not paved.

Major General Chaney departed from the island for other duty. Command was turned over to Brigadier General Moore, United States Army. On August 19, representatives from the 8th, 31st, 90th and 133rd Battalions were sent to ABGD Guam for temporary additional duty in connection with recoutfitting of battalions and forward movement.

Commander Herd as Acting Officer in Charge of the Brigade presented seven Bronze Star awards to one CEC officer and six enlisted men of the 133rd Battalion on August 22 for work with the Fourth Marine Division during the assault on Iwo Jima. Similar presentation was made to Commander D. J. Ermilio, CEC USNR, and five enlisted men of the 31st Battalion at exercised held on August 25.

On August 31, the following battalions were ordered as indicated: 8th Battalion to Kure, Honshu; 31st Battalion to Sasebo, Kyushu; 90th Battalion to Yokosuka, Honshu; 133rd Battalion to Ominato, Honshu.

Inactivations previously approved were started to be carried out on September 1, and on September 8 the 106th Naval Construction Battalion Section 2 had completed inactivation. The 8th Naval Construction Regiment was inactivated on September 10. The 62nd Naval Construction Battalion completed inactivation on September 12. The 95th Naval Construction Battalion completed inactivation on September 20.

Orders received the middle of September approved the inactivation of the 9th Naval Construction Brigade and Construction Battalion Detachment No. 1078.

Commander W. C. G. Church, CGC USN, reported to the Brigade on September 12 and relieved Commander D. J. Ermilio as Officer in Charge of the 31st Battalion. On September 15, Lt. Comdr. C. W. Palmer, CGC USNR, reported to the Brigade for duty and as relief for Commander R. P. Murphy, CGC USNR, the Officer in Charge of the 133rd Battalion.

On September 15, the strength of the battalions were further decreased by reductions through a point system inaugurated by Alnav #252. The strength of the Battalions were as follows: 8th Battalion, 637; 31st Battalion, 602; 90th Battalion, 682; and 133rd Battalion 726.

The 90th Naval Construction Battalion and 41st Naval Construction Regiment were the first units to move from the island for the Japanese Empire. Loading of ship was underway September 13, but was halted for four days from September 15 to September 19 due to storms and high seas.

TECHNICAL

There were no major obstacles to overcome in the construction of the base. As previously planned, it was anticipated that there would be considerable quantity of rock excavation. This was not the case, as the material was consolidated volcanic ash that could be removed with scrapers, rooters, power shovels, and similar construction equipment without the use of explosives. The character of the terrain presented no unusual difficulties, and the soil characteristics were such that construction progressed faster than anticipated. The one difficulty encountered was steam pockets. Steam would emit from fissures in the surface without causing any material damage. Once the steam outlet was obstructed with paving, water would condense and saturate and weaken the subgrade, thus causing failures of pavement.

There were no special innovations in base development, or unusual construction procedures. Two items are worthy of mention; use of side boom attached to Caterpillar tractor for use in laying pipe, and a pipe threading machine mounted on a jeep frame and powered with salvaged Jap equipment.

The primary mission of Iwo was the establishment of a fighter base and for the restaging of heavy bombers by furnishing additional fuel on their raids to Japan. Considerable use was made of the facilities for fighter forces and until mid August at the cessation of hostilities, more than 2000 heavy bombers (B-29s) had used the VLR facilities of Iwo. This half-way mark between the Marianas and Japan received considerable publicity in newspapers and periodicals.

After cessation of hostilities, considerable work was held in abeyance and only one of the VLR strips was paved. The second fueling strip with 60 outlets was abandoned, while grading was only partially completed.

COMMENTS

It had been anticipated that there would be considerable damage to tires due to rock and shrapnel. Fortunately there was little damage to tires even in the earliest phases of the operation. The shrapnel in the black sand areas was buried into the sand and seldom penetrated the tires. Two magnetic road sweepers were brought along for picking up fragments of steel, but they were of little use except on smoothly graded areas. Magnetic properties of the black sand would cause it to attach itself to the sweeper bar and reduce its effectiveness for picking up shrapnel. The sweepers were of value on the airfield runways to remove shrapnel.

The 8th Regiment and some of its battalions were extremely critical of the spare parts situation and the deadlined equipment. Also the 31st Battalion felt that the units were not receiving sufficient attention in their quest for parts and the repair of equipment. In the opinion of the officer in charge, this criticism is entirely unfounded. At the peak of operations there were some 650 pieces of equipment being operated, exclusive of jeeps and personnel carriers, and at no time did the deadline list exceed 9% of the total. Land mines damaged several tractors and kept them inoperative for long periods of time, as spare parts of the type required were not available, nor could they be readily obtained. The brigade and visiting and inspecting officers from other commands were highly complimentary of the equipment maintenance record of the battalions, and it is believed that the organization under the brigade kept as much equipment in operation as any similar sized unit in the Pacific.

A large portion of the credit for the excellent maintenance of equipment should go to Construction Battalion Detachment 1078 for obtaining and distributing spare parts. Many of the battalions brought additional spare parts with them which they had procured prior to embarking for the operation. The spare parts organization

filled approximately 60% of all requisitions presented to them.

The health and morale of the battalion personnel was considered exceptional. The highest number of sick at any one time was 144 officers and men out of 7911 for a percentage of 1.92. This was on June 29, 1945. There were no epidemics and no unusual accidents resulting in loss of man days. Dysentery was practically unknown, probably through excellent fly control by use of DDT by spraying from planes, constant vigilance in disposal of enemy dead, the disposal of any breeding places for flies and other disease vectors.

The appendii cover various phases of the construction and other pertinent items such as water distillation, quantity of water made, quantity of fuel consumed, quantity of rock crushed, total quantity of excavation on the airdromes, square yards of paving. Also included in the appendii are progress reports listing projects and all work orders issued under the various categories.

ENEMY CASUALTIES

During the construction of camps by construction battalions, the enemy was frequently encountered. The 8th Battalion working in Target Area 184 R and S encountered the most Japs. Their records show that they captured 40 and killed 79. Some killed were in conjunction with Marine personnel in dividing guard posts and by blasting caves while clearing their camp area. Records of the other battalions are: 31st Battalion, one captured, one killed; 62nd Battalion, three captured, thirteen killed; 90th Battalion, none captured, fourteen killed (the 90th Battalion aided an Army group to remove 23 Japanese prisoners from one cave and twenty-five from another); 95th Battalion, one captured and twenty-eight killed; 133rd Battalion, one captured and none killed. The 106th Battalion (Section 2), Construction Battalion Detachment 1078, regimental and brigade staffs did not come in contact with the enemy. Total enemy killed and captured was 46 captured and 135 killed.

Demolition crews from the 8th, 95th and 31st Battalions did considerable work with some of the Army units in clearing caves and blasting them shut. A number of the enemy were casualties resulting from these activities, but they were not all credited to the battalions furnishing the demolition details. The enemy was usually encountered at night by the camp guards. During the early days, extensive use was made of trip flares and parachute flares to light up the area when the enemy was moving about.

Another activity which brought considerable contact with the enemy was in conducting survey operations. The survey parties worked through exceedingly rough terrain and some of the enemy were killed by the guards

accompanying the survey parties. This was particularly true with the 8th, 90th and 133rd Construction Battalions. Seabee, Marine and Army guards were used to provide protection for the survey party members.

NOTES ON INACTIVATION PERIOD:

Under the heading of Chronology of Operations it is to be noted that the Brigade as a unit practically ceased to function after September 15, 1945. During the period September 15 to October 1, 1945 the organization was devoted to the closing out of battalion records, the transfer of personnel to staging centers for return to the States for discharge and the preparation of the remaining battalions for departure to various bases in Japan.

The inactivation of the 95th Battalion was completed on September 20, 1945.

High seas and storm warnings delayed loading of ships and the embarking of the 41st Regiment and 90th Battalion. These two units embarked and sailed from Iwo Jima on October 1, 1945. On departure of the Officer in Charge of the Brigade one officer and a Chief Motor Mechanist's mate were detailed to remain at Iwo to close out the records on construction equipment and to complete authorized transfers to the Island Command. Arrangements were completed for shipping of excess equipment to the Advance Base Construction Depot at Guam. The officer and chief rejoined the Regiment at Yokosuka, Japan, on 22 October 1945.

Another officer and Chief Yeoman remained at Iwo Jima from October 1 until October 14, 1945 to handle records and administrative matters pertaining to the Brigade. During that period the 133rd Battalion was consolidated into a C.B. H.U.

The Brigade history was completed at Yokosuka, Japan on November 2, 1945. The inactivation of the unit was completed on that date. At the time of inactivation three officers remained attached to the Brigade. These officers were temporarily assigned to the 41st Regiment for duty pending reassignment.



**NO
LOGO
AVAILABLE**







